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AP English

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27 April 2009

Othello Study Guide

Plot Summary:

1. Iago and Roderigo tell Brabanzio his daughter has been stolen and married to Othello, a black general.
2. Brabanzio takes his accusations to the senate, but they too are wooed by Othello and Brabanzio drops the accusations. Othello is sent to Cyprus with his army, and Desdemona accompanies him.
3. Iago manipulates Roderigo into fighting Cassio in order to win over Desdemona. Othello arrives and strips Cassio of his rank.
4. Iago plans on framing Cassio and Desdemona to make Othello jealous.
5. Cassio pleads with Desdemona, who promises she will do everything in her power to get him his position back.
6. Othello fears Desdemona is sleeping with Cassio, and her pleas to reinstate him “confirm” his fears.
7. Desdemona binds Othello’s head with her handkerchief, but it falls to the floor and Emilia steals it for Othello.
8. Iago plants the handkerchief as evidence of the affair. Othello is so angry he falls into a trance.
9. Iago talks to Cassio about Bianca, but Othello thinks Cassio is talking about sleeping with Desdemona. Othello hits Desdemona and leaves.
10. Iago manipulates Roderigo into killing Cassio to win the love of Desdemona, but he fails and Iago only wounds Cassio. Roderigo is killed.
11. Othello tells Desdemona to wait in their bed. He confronts her and strangles her.
12. Emilia arrives and tells Othello Roderigo has been killed and Cassio has been wounded.
13. Othello tells Emilia he killed Desdemona because of the affair, but Desdemona wakes up and protests that it was suicide.
14. Emilia reveals that Iago made her steal the handkerchief, and Iago kills her before being captured.
15. Embarrassed, Othello kills himself with his sword and the only character left alive is Iago.

**Characters:**

**Othello**- the protagonist/hero. Othello is a Moor and a general, and has risen to a high position of power despite his race. Othello used his stories of his accomplishments to woo Desdemona and the senate. However, Othello is not perfect. His flaws include being gullible and unintelligent, as well as impulsive, and these flaws make him a perfect target for the manipulations of Iago.

**Iago-** the antagonist and Shakespeare’s perfect villain. Iago resents Othello because he chose Cassio as lieutenant over Iago. Iago has an excellent grasp on human nature and what makes certain people tick and he uses this ability to manipulate others to get what he wants. In Othello, Iago never kills anyone directly save for Roderigo- he manipulates others into doing the deed. He has sociopathic tendencies and never shows remorse for any of his actions.

**Desdemona-** Othello’s wife. She is manipulative as well, using her beauty and her power over her husband to get what she wants. She is a faithful wife, but very independent, which only spurs more of Othello’s suspicions of an affair. Desdemona is devoted to Othello and tries to take the blame away from him for her murder, claiming it was suicide.

**Cassio-** Othello’s demoted lieutenant. Iago’s resents his promotion to lieutenant and tries to strip him of his power and get rid of him. Cassio is devoted to Othello and is ashamed after Othello strips him of his rank after the drunken fight in Cyprus. Cassio’s friendship with Desdemona is manipulated by Iago to seem like an affair to jealous Othello.

**Emilia-** Iago’s wife. She is independent and sees things for what they are. She serves as a foil to Iago.

**Roderigo-** a stupid suitor of Desdemona. He is manipulated by Iago into first giving him riches, then killing Cassio.

**Bianca-** Cassio’s prostitute.

**Brabanzio-** Desdemona’s father.

**Setting:**

Venice- In the white world of Venice, Othello is the outsider but has worked up to a position of power.

Cyprus- ‘the wild’. In Cyprus, much more can happen without the restrictions of Venice.

**Symbols:**

The handkerchief- symbolizes fidelity in marriage and the importance of Desdemona to Othello.

Othello- represents the dangers of trusting others.

Plants- Iago’s references to plants suggests that he is a good ‘gardener’ of others, tending to them and shaping them as he likes

**Motifs:**

Plants

Animals

Jealousy

**Themes:**

Those you love will hurt you the most.

The dangers of trusting others.

Importance of fidelity

Difficulties of an outsider

Death of a Salesman Study Guide

Plot Summary:

1. Willy returns home from a sales trip, complaining about his son Biff’s lack of success. Linda suggests he talk to his boss to get a local job so he won’t have to travel so much.
2. Biff and Happy reminisce on the past and talk about their dreams for the future. (Loman Brothers Sporting Goods)
3. Flashback: Bernard reminds Willy that Biff must study for math class or fail. Willy tries to convince Bernard to let Biff cheat off him, and when Bernard refuses, Willy tells his boys that Bernard is smart, but not “well-liked,” which will hinder his success.
4. Flashback: a younger Willy returns for his trip boasting about his sales then finally revealing he has only earned meager wages.
5. Flashback: Woman flirts with Willy and thanks him for giving her stockings. Return to first flashback, where Linda is sewing her stocking and telling Willy how Biff stole a football and is too rough with girls.
6. Charley and Willy play cards. Charley offers Willy a job, but he refuses multiple times. Ben enters as Willy’s hallucination and tells him he is going to look at property in Alaska.
7. Linda and the boys discuss Willy’s mental deterioration, and Linda mentions he has tried to commit suicide with his car and with the gas pipe.
8. Willy goes to Howard’s office to ask for a local job, but all Howard is interested in is his new tape recorder. Howard rejects Willy, and Willy throws a fit. Flashback: Ben inviting Willy to Alaska, Bernard and Biff excited about Biff’s championship football game.
9. In Howard’s office, Willy sees Bernard, now very successful (trying a case in the Supreme Court).
10. Willy sees Charley and asks him to loan money. Charley offers Willy a job, which he once again refuses. Willy tells Charley he was fired.
11. Biff and Happy take Willy out to dinner. Before Willy arrives, Biff tells happy he went to see his former employer about a loan, but he didn’t even recognize Biff.
12. When Biff tells Willy this, he becomes angry and goes to the washroom, where he has a flashback of Biff catching Willy cheating on Linda with the Woman. Biff and Happy leave Willy at the restaurant.
13. Willy first goes to a seed store, then returns home. Linda yells at Biff and Happy for abandoning Willy when they return home after a night with the call girls.
14. Biff finds Willy in the garden, planting seeds and holding an imaginary conversation with Ben about a proposition ($20,000 in insurance money if he commits suicide) Biff and Willy fight, and Biff cries, showing Willy that Biff loves him.Willy confides in Ben how happy Biff will be with the insurance money from Willy’s suicide, then drives off to kill himself.
15. After Willy’s funeral, his family laments on how no one came. Biff says Willy had the wrong dreams, but Charley says Willy was a victim of his profession. Biff invites Happy to come out west, but Happy decides to stay in New York.

**Character Summary:**

Major Characters:

1. **Willy Loman-** Willy is an old traveling salesman living in New York with his wife and his two sons. He believes in the American Dream, but his view is faulty- he believes that being “well-liked” will lead to more success than just being smart or working hard. Willy is mentally ill, suffering from hallucinations and flashbacks so intense that he cannot distinguish between what is illusion and what is reality. Willy has a tense relationship with his son, Biff, and feels that Biff is unsuccessful because of spite, claiming “spite is the word of [Biff’s] undoing.” Willy also had an affair with the Woman, which Biff discovers. Willy’s mental instability eventually leads to his suicide.
2. **Biff Loman-** Willy’s older son. He was a football star in high school, with many friends and admirers, but he failed math and caught Willy cheating with the Woman, and decided not to go to summer school and subsequently did not graduate. Biff’s kleptomania prevents longevity in any of his jobs. Biff realizes that Willy’s American Dream is false and that Willy is delusional. Biff longs to move out West again and work with his hands, as he feels he was meant to do. Biff and Willy are on bad terms, as Willy considers Biff a failure and Biff considers Willy a fraud. After Willy’s death, Biff prepares to move out West.
3. **Happy Loman-** Willy’s younger son. He looks up to Willy and tries to follow in his footsteps as a salesman. Happy, like Willy, has little success in his career. Happy’s sense of self importance reflects in the way he makes his job, an assistant to an assistant, much more important than it actually is. Happy has terrible business ethics, sleeping with his bosses’ girlfriends.
4. **Bernard**- Charley’s son. Bernard was smart and rational in high school, which Willy claimed would hinder his success. Bernard looked up to Biff. Bernard’s intelligence and not being “well-liked,” which Willy considered a hindrance, actually led to a successful career as a lawyer. Willy does not like Bernard’s success because it shows him Happy and Biff’s lack of.

Minor Characters:

1. **Linda Loman**- Willy’s wife. She has a strange affection for her boy’s masculinity and sees through Willy’s delusions of a successful future.
2. **Charley**- Willy’s neighbor, a successful business owner. Charley lends Willy money weekly to take home to Linda as a paycheck and constantly offers Willy a job, which he refuses.
3. **Ben**- Willy’s brother. To Willy, Ben represents the success Willy never attained.
4. **The Woman**- Willy’s mistress. Her attention to Willy boosts his ego.

**Setting:**

1. Willy’s house in Brooklyn. It is rundown but well-loved. Willy complains that the surrounding apartment complexes have boxed their house in, and they have to room to breathe. Willy did much of the carpentry in the house, a skill which he has, but finds unsuitable for his version of the American Dream. Willy’s house represents all of his hard work, as he is finally going to make the last payment on his mortgage.
2. The West. Biff works out west and loves the feeling of freedom it conveys. He feels men like Happy, Willy, and himself were meant to do hard labor under the sun.

**Symbols**:

1. Ben- Ben symbolizes Willy’s ambitions. Ben represents everything Willy is not, but wishes to be. Willy envies Ben’s success, however vague it may be (he walked into the jungle and founds diamonds).
2. Diamonds- represents Willy’s desire to be successful and leave behind a tangible, material inheritance to his family. When Willy enters the jungle to retrieve the diamonds, he is killing himself so his family can collect his inheritance, thus adding meaning to his life.
3. Seeds- represent Willy’s failed attempts at achieving the American Dream. He feels he has failed with Biff, his own seed. Willy attempts to plant seeds before his death, symbolizing his drive to leave behind something tangible for his family.

**Motifs**

1. Manipulation of time
2. The West
3. The American Dream

**Themes**

1. Inability to distinguish reality from illusion hinders success.
2. Recognition is necessary for success.
3. The importance of valuing acceptance over popularity.

The Importance of Being Earnest Study Guide

**Plot Summary:**

1. Jack announces to Algernon that he intends to propose to Gwendolyn Fairfax, Algernon’s cousin. Jack admits to Algernon that he has been living a double life as his fictional brother, “Ernest”. Algernon tells Jack he is a “Bunburyist,” just as Algernon uses a terminally ill imaginary friend Bunbury to get out of events.
2. Jack proposes to Gwendolyn, and she accepts, but Jack is frustrated to learn that Gwendolyn is obsessed with the name Ernest.
3. Lady Bracknell questions Jack to determine his eligibility, but she is shocked to find that Jack does not know his parents- he was adopted by a man who found him inside a handbag- and forbids the marriage.
4. Jack returns to the country to “kill his brother”, but Algernon has already arrived posing as Ernest.
5. Algernon falls in love with Cecily and proposes, soon learning that Cecily is fixated on the name ‘Ernest’.
6. Jack and Algernon both speak to Father Chasuble about being christened Ernest to please their fiancés.
7. Gwendolyn and Cecily meet and talk, only to find they have both been engaged to Ernest Worthing.
8. Jack and Algernon arrive, and both of the girls points out the other has been deceived- Cecily’s Ernest is really Algernon, and Gwendolyn’s Ernest is really Jack.
9. The women are united by their anger at their fiancés and shun them for the rest of the afternoon, becoming close friends
10. In the house, Gwendolyn and Cecily question Jack and Algernon as to the reasons for their lies. When the men give satisfactory answers, all is well, except for the names.
11. Lady Bracknell arrives at Jack’s estate to find Gwendolyn, and she once again refuses to allow their marriage. Algernon introduces Cecily to Lady Bracknell, who holds no interest until Algernon tells her that Cecily is worth a lot of money. Jack refuses to give consent to Cecily’s marriage until Lady Bracknell gives her consent to his.
12. Dr Chasuble mentions Miss Prism, and Lady Bracknell requests to see her.
13. Lady Bracknell questions Miss Prism on the whereabouts of the baby she left with and never returned. Miss Prism admits to misplacing the baby in her handbag and her manuscript in the carriage.
14. Lady Bracknell explains that Jack is her sister’s child. Jack discovers that he is Lady Bracknell’s nephew and Algernon’s older brother.
15. Jack also discovers that he was originally christened ‘Ernest John’, so it turns out he was unwittingly earnest about his name all along.

**Characters:**

**Jack Worthing-** Jack in the country and Ernest in the city, Mr. Worthing is a wealthy young man who uses his fictional brother “Ernest” to escape to London. Jack does not know his parents- he was found in a handbag in a train station cloakroom and subsequently adopted. Jack falls in love with Gwendolyn, but she obsesses over his fictional name “Ernest”. Lady Bracknell will not consent to Jack’s marriage because he does not know his parents, but in the end, he discovers that she is his aunt and Algernon is actually his younger brother. Jack wants to appear moral and classy, but doesn’t mind lying to achieve his façade.

**Algernon Moncrieff-** Jack’s best friend and actual younger brother. Algernon is an amoral bachelor living in London. Algy falls in love with Cecily, Jack’s ward, under the guise of Jack’s fictional brother Ernest. Algernon has a fictional friend Bunbury, whose chronic illness Algernon uses as an excuse to escape social obligations, such as dinner with his Aunt Augusta.

**Gwendolyn Fairfax**- Jack’s fiancé and Algernon’s cousin. Gwendolyn, much like her mother, is very pretentious and speaks her mind about what is tasteful and what is acceptable. Gwendolyn loves Jack, but her love is superficial, for she only appears to love him for his name (Ernest), claiming his name “inspires absolute confidence”. Gwendolyn represents the shallow and superficial upper class thought in Victorian England.

**Cecily Cardew-** Jack’s ward, the granddaughter of Jack’s adopted father. Cecily, like Gwendolyn, fixates on the name Ernest, but rather on its wickedness than its virtue. Cecily falls in love with Algernon before they meet, fantasizing about her relationship with Ernest. Cecily is a “child of nature,” the antithesis of Gwendolyn Fairfax.

**Lady Bracknell**- Algernon’s dictatorial aunt and Gwendolyn’s mother. She represents the stupidity of the Victorian upper class.

**Miss Prism**- Cecily’s governess. She has feelings for Dr. Chasuble and her observations are amusing.

**Dr. Chasuble-** The reverend on Jack’s estate. He has feeling for Miss Prism.

**Lane-** Algernon’s butler. He knows Algernon is a Bunburyist.

**Settings**:

**Victorian London**- Wilde portrays the upper class in Victorian London as stupid and superficial, only accepting what will raise their status.

**The country**- Jack is Jack in the country and Earnest in the city. Mr. Worthing has a sizeable estate in the country.

**Symbols:**

“Bunburying”- an escape from obligations/ moral requirements

Food- “sugar is not fashionable anymore”, “Cake is rarely seen at the best houses nowadays”

The importance of being earnest/Ernest- reflects the flawed, superficial Victorian mindset.

**Themes:**

The dangers of living a double life

Ability to bend morals to fit standards of society

Superficiality of the upper class

Marriage as a tool

**Motifs:**

Death

Puns

The Crucible Study Guide

* HUAC and the McCarthy trials
* Millers relates himself to Proctor- protecting personal integrity and not giving up the names of others

**Plot Summary**

1. A group of girls go dancing naked in the woods with Tituba. When the girls are caught, Reverend Parris’s daughter magically falls into a “trance”, and rumors of witchcraft spread throughout Salem.
2. Betty awakes and is examined by Reverend Hale. Hale questions Abigail, which raises his suspicions.
3. Hale then questions Tituba, who not only admits to associating with the devil, but also accuses other townspeople of ‘witchcraft’
4. Proctor, Putnam, Parris, and Giles argue about Hale’s appointment as the ‘witch hunter’.
5. Abigail and Betty confess to drinking blood and name the other ‘witches’.
6. Elizabeth begs John Proctor to weaken Abigail’s hold over the town by revealing her as a fraud, and when he refuses, Elizabeth becomes jealous and accuses him of still having feelings for Abigail.
7. Reverend Hale arrests Rebecca Nurse, Martha Corey, and Elizabeth Proctor.
8. Proctor convinces his servant Mary to testify against Abigail and the other girls.
9. Mary reveals the girls as fraudulent, but they claim she bewitched them and her testimony is useless.
10. Proctor reveals the truth of his affair with Abigail to the court in order to reveal her as a fraud, but when the judge asks Elizabeth, she denies the affair, subsequently discrediting his claim.
11. The girls’ accusations cause Mary to break down and accuse Proctor, who is arrested and thrown in jail.
12. Abigail runs away, taking all of Reverend Parris’s money with her.
13. Hale begs the accused to falsely confess to save their lives, but they refuse. Elizabeth, under Danforth’s urging, convinces John to confess.
14. Elizabeth tells John that Giles Corey was killed by being pressed to death with large stones, although he never confessed to or denied the charges of witchcraft.
15. John retracts his confession, choosing to protect his personal integrity, and goes to the gallows.

**Characters:**

**Major:**

1. **John Proctor**- the plays ‘hero’. Proctor is looked down upon by member of his town because he does not go to church, but the only reason he does not attend is because he disagrees with the ideals of Reverend Parris. Proctor has an affair with Abigail, and her obsession with him, and jealousy of his wife, leads to accusations of witchcraft. Proctor confesses his affair in an attempt to reveal Abigail as a fraud, but he is only arrested and convicted of witchcraft. When given a final chance to confess and save his life, Proctor chooses to protect his personal integrity and die, rather than live with a tarnished reputation.
2. **Giles Corey-** an elderly farmer in Salem. His wife, Martha, is accused and convicted of witchcraft. Giles was held in contempt of the court and killed by being pressed to death with large stones. However, Giles neither admitted nor denied his involvement in witchcraft, choosing not to enter a plea so his land would go to his family.
3. **Abigail-** Reverend Parris’ niece. She worked as Proctor’s servant and had an affair with John, who she still has feelings for. Elizabeth suspected the affair and fired Abigail, and since, she has had difficulty finding work. Abigail starts the intimations of witchcraft with the sick and twisted hope that if she accuses and successfully convicts Elizabeth, John will love Abigail again. Abigail had a very low social status, but her claims of witchcraft gave her power over the townsfolk- one accusation could send a person to court. Abigail is brilliantly cunning and manipulates the entire town, eventually fleeing with all of Parris’s money.
4. **Reverend Hale**- a young minister thought to be an expert on ‘witchcraft’, brought in to Salem to investigate such claims. His presence sparks more and more false accusations. By the end of the play, Hale has lost faith in the court and dejectedly asks Danforth to pardon the accused, because they will not confess.

**Minor:**

1. **Elizabeth Proctor-** John’s wife. She is extremely loyal to her husband, which leads to Proctor’s downfall in court when Elizabeth lies to protect his reputation.
2. **Reverend Parris-** Betty’s father and Abigail’s uncle. The opposite of Proctor, Parris is more concerned with protecting his reputation than his integrity.
3. **Rebecca Nurse-** a respected woman, she falls prey to the accusations of witchcraft, showing how even the most esteemed can come under fire.
4. **Judge Danforth-** judge presiding over the witch trials, convinced he is doing good by finding the evil ‘witches’ in Salem.

**Setting:**

**1692** **Salem-** A Puritan town in which the church ruled over all civil matters. Many of the residents have disputes with other residents over land and money. One incident in the woods led to the entire town embroiled in accusations of witchcraft, and many esteemed individuals were brought to trial and forced to confess.

**1950’s McCarthyism**- The Crucible is an allegory for the House on Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), headed by Senator McCarthy. McCarthy was convinced of an underlying communist presence determined to undermine democracy and existing in all facets of American life, especially in Hollywood and popular culture. Thousands of Americans were accused and brought to testify before the committee about their alleged ties to the Communist party. The anti-Communist fervor that swept the United States at this time parallels the mania of the Salem witch hunts.

**Symbols:**

1. **The Crucible-** a crucible is a great trial or test, or a process to discern impurities. The witch trials were obviously a great test, but also a test of who would crack under pressure. The witch trials were not only to root out the ‘witches’, but to find those with a weak constitution- if they would give in to a judge, then they would surrender to the devil.
2. **Candlesticks-** The pewter candlesticks were replaced with the gilded ones in the church. Gold conceals imperfections, but it must be mixed with other metals to be viable, making it impure. Parris replaces the pewter candlesticks with the gilded ones, showing his value of reputation over purity.
3. **The Salem witch trials** were not actually a symbol, but rather an allegory for the wave of anti-Communism that swept the United States following World War II.

**Motifs:**

1. Empowerment of women
2. Seasons
3. Time of day

**Themes:**

1. Personal integrity is more important than mob mentality.
2. Intolerance leads to false accusations.
3. The danger of placing faith above reason.
4. The danger of hysteria.